

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 01154 051315Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 IO-13 OMB-01 ACDA-07 /079 W
-----060508Z 015391 /17

R 051054Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2600
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRAGUE 1154

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CZ
SUBJECT: MAY DAY MANIFESTATION IN PRAGUE

1. MAY FIRST DEMONSTRATIONS IN PRAGUE THIS YEAR MUST HAVE SET A NEW RECORD FOR LACK OF ENTHUSIASM, SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL.
2. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT POLICE WERE STOPPING PRAGUE PEOPLE HEADED OUT OF TOWN FOR THE COUNTRY FRIDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 29, AND ASKING WHY THEY DID NOT INTEND TO STAY AROUND FOR THE MANIFESTATION.

ON SATURDAY, APRIL 30, WE OBSERVED ENORMOUS NUMBER OF PRIVATE VEHICLES CREEPING SLOWLY OUT OF PRAGUE AS IF WARY OF BEING STOPPED BY POLICE. GOOD WEATHER ON MAY 1 PROBABLY ADDED TO IMPATIENCE OF CZECHS REQUIRED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE: FROM MIXED MOTIVES, PERHAPS, SOME CZECHS REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO ATTEND DESPITE EXPECTATION OF REPRISALS AT PLACES OF WORK.
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3. MAY DAY FESTIVITIES FEATURED SHORT SPEECH IN CZECH BY HUSAK, WHO WENT BEYOND THE PALE IN PRAISING THE SOVIET UNION. SOVIET HYMN WAS NOT, HOWEVER, PLAYED, AS WE HEARD IT DONE LAST MAY DAY IN SLOVAKIA. ANTONIN KAPEK, PRAGUE COMMUNIST PARTY FIRST SECRETARY, INTRODUCED HUSAK AND STAYED CLOSE TO HIM FOR REMAINDER OF PROGRAM, FUELING SPECULATION AMONG FOREIGN OBSERVERS

AS TO HIS POLITICAL AMBITIONS. ALL CZECH MEMBERS OF THE CPCZ PRESIDIUM WERE PRESENT ON REVIEWING STAND. LENART AND COLOTKA WERE IN BRATISLAVA. BILAK, TO HUSAK'S AND KAPEK'S LEFT, BEHAVED QUITE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE OTHERS IN LINE-UP: HE POSITIONED HIMSELF FAR FORWARD TOWARDS EDGE OF REVIEWING STAND, LED APPLAUSE ONCE OR TWICE DURING HUSAK'S SPEECH WHERE OTHERWISE NONE WOULD HAVE STARTED, AND WAVED TO CROWD SPORATICALLY WITH A HINT OF IMPATIENCE.

4. SLOGANS FOR THIS YEAR'S FETE INCLUDED THE STANDARD "WITH THE SOVIET UNION FOREVER AND NEVER OTHERWISE," AND "WARSAW PACT: STRONG DEFENSE AGAINST THE AGGRESSIVE EFFORTS OF IMPERIALISM."

5. THE CROWD, ESTIMATED AT 250,000 COMPOSED LARGELY OF THOSE SCHEDULED TO PARADE, DISPLAYED GROSS INATTENTION TO HUSAK SPEECH AN ANNOUNCER LED CHEERS OVER PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM WITHOUT GENERATING RESPONSE FROM ANY BUT THOSE PASSING DIRECTLY UNDER REVIEWING STAND. IN OTHER PARTS OF FIELD, SPECTATORS LOLLED ON GRASS, CONSUMED SAUSAGES AND BEER, TALKED TO EACH OTHER AND PLAYED THEIR OWN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (E.G., TRUMPETS) LOUDLY IN DISREGARD OF MARCHES BEING PLAYED BY BANDS. SEVERAL COMMENTS LIKE "THIS IS MADNESS" AND "MY GOD, LETS GET OUT OF HERE," WERE OVERHEARD. POLICING OF EVENT WAS LAKADAISICAL AT BEST. ALL IN ALL WE THINK THE YEARLY RITUAL WAS EVEN MORE FORCED AND HOLLOW THAN IN THE PAST.
BYRNE

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